**Questions to Consider**

Chapter 1: Introduction to Cognitive Psychology

* **What is cognitive psychology? How did it develop as a field?**

Cognitive psychology is the study of how our minds receive, store, and use information. This includes the­ory and research about perception, attention, mem­ory, language use, decision making, and problem solving. The roots of the discipline may be traced to philosophy and physiology before the twentieth cen­tury. However, modern cognitive psychology primar­ily developed since the mid-twentieth century. This was in part a reaction to the behaviorist tradition within psychology but also is a reflection of develop­ments within other disciplines, including biology, lin­guistics, and computer science.

* **How have psychologists approached the study of cognition?**

Explanations of cognitive processes have been devel­oped within three general approaches: representa­tionalist, embodied, and biologically motivated. Representationalist theories of cognition generally view the mind as a symbolic processor, similar to a computer. In these views, information is conceptual­ized as abstract representations that may be acted on by mental operations. Embodied approaches envi­sion the mind as something situated within a body and an environmental context. These approaches examine cognition as interactions between individu­als and their environment. Biologically motivated approaches to cognition focus on theories based on neurologically inspired elements.

* **What types of research methods are useful in the study of cognition?**

Three main types of research designs are employed in research in cognition: (1) case studies that focus on the behaviors of a distinct individual or group, (2) correlational studies that examine relationships between sets of dependent (or response) variables, and (3) experiments that test causal relationships between variables through the manipulation of independent variables and control of the conditions under which the dependent (or response) variables are measured. Researchers may also use quasi-inde­pendent variables (group subjects based on a particu­lar characteristic such as gender or age) to compare groups for the dependent variable when manipulation of a variable is not possible.

* **What behaviors do psychologists observe to study cognition?**

There is a range of behaviors studied by cognitive psychologists. A common measure is accuracy for a task (such as memory or perceptual judgments). Another common measure is the speed to complete a task (such as identify a word or solve a problem). There are also behaviors specific to an area of cognitive psychology (such as measurement of brain activity in cognitive neuroscience).